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SOME

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING

Sir *Humphry Mackworth's*

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P2.

BOOK

AGAINST

Occasional Conformity,

INTITUL'D,

Peace at Home, &c.

In a Letter to Himself.

Printed in the Year 1704.

Some Thoughts concerning Sir Humphry Mackworth's *Book*, &c.

SIR,

YOUR *Peace at Home* hath made a great noiſe Abroad; never did the Title-page of any Book raiſe expectation to a higher pitch: I got a Friend of mine (one of your Low-Churchmen) to peruſe it, and find him much diſſatisfied with it: He confeſſeth you have made a very mannerly Apology for your ſelf to the Houſe of Lords, but cannot imagine that this way of treating 'em is conſiſtent with the Priviledges of that Great and Auguſt Aſſembly. To take the Arguments us'd by their Managers at their free Conference with the Houſe of Commons, almoſt Paragraph by Paragraph, as printed by their Lordſhips Order, and endeavour to expoſe 'em to the Nation as weak or impertinent, he ſaith, little agrees with that deference and reſpect to their Lordſhips, which you pretend to in your Preface; and to offer this as the Subſtance of what you intended to have ſaid at that Conference, if not prevented by an Accident, makes you appear very fond of your own Conceptions, as if there were ſomething material in your Treatiſe, which the Managers for the Houſe of Commons had either forgotten, or not ſo well underſtood; whenas that Debate was carried on by the Managers of both Houſes, with the greateſt Addreſs and Strength of Reaſon, Wit and Judgment, that the ſubject matter was capable of. And my Friend doth ſo readily concur with

you in your Sentiments, that there are in that great Body of the Commons Houſe (and particularly among the Managers they appointed for that Conference) Perſons more able and better qualified to defend the Bill then in queſtion, that he thinks it no ſmall wonder you would adventure to offer to the World thoſe little Fragments whereof your Book is compos'd, and which are no more than the Refuſe of that great Debate.

From this general Diſcourſe we deſcended to Particulars: He objected to ſeveral Paſſages in your Book, whereof I ſhall repeat the Subſtance as briefly as I can in my own Words.

You ſay the Members of the Eſtabliſh'd Church can never come under the Denomination of a Party. How! cannot that ſort of men that are ſupported and countenanced by a Government, be as properly called a Party, as that ſort of men who are diſcountenanced? You are deſired, Sir, to oblige the World with the nice diſtinction, that warrants this Notion ſurpaſſing all Underſtanding; and to reconcile it to what you ſay juſt before in the ſame Epiſtle Dedicatory, That the Fears and Jealouſies of the Members of the Church of *England*, and of thoſe who diſſent from it, ſeem in a fair way to be determined to the Satisfaction of all Parties. Were not the Members of the Church of *England* intended here then for one of the Parties? You forget your ſelf again in the 10*th* Page of your Book, where you ſuppoſe the Nation to be divided into Parties, and that Churchmen and Diſſenters can never draw well together.

Your Inſtance in *H.* 3. of *France* is altogether as extraordinary, as what you take ſo much exception at, *viz.* that the Church of *Rome* encourages the Occaſional Conformity of Proteſtants, and have gain'd their ends by it; which is a known Truth, and to the purpoſe. And why ſhould not the Church of *England* hope for as good Succeſs by the Occaſional Conformity of Diſſenters, as the Church of *Rome* hath had by that of Proteſtants? Oh, but the Pope and the Church of *Rome* ought not by any means to have been mention'd in an Argument of this nature, nor their Exam-

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ple recommended to the People of *England*: How then, Sir, came you to recommend to her Majeſty the Example of a Prince of ſo black a Memory as *H.* 3. of *France?* one of that accurſed Triumvirate, who plotted the Deſtruction of ſo many thouſand Proteſtants, without diſtinction of Age or Sex, and accompliſh'd it all over the Kingdom of *France* in one fatal Night, when the Streets of *Paris* and other Cities ran with Proteſtant Blood; when under colour of a Marriage between that King's Siſter and the King of *Navarre* (afterwards *H.* 4. of *France*) her Majeſty's Great Grandfather, the Heads of the Proteſtant Party (I hope, Sir, you'll give me leave to call them ſo) were treacherouſly decoy'd to Court and ſacrific'd, and the King of *Navarre* himſelf, then the Chief of that Party, exchanged a Bridal Bed for a Priſon.

But this is not all: For he hath been very little converſant in Hiſtory, who does not know that this very King (whoſe Example you propoſe to her Majeſty) by his weakning the Diſſenting Intereſt, and giving up himſelf and the Strength of his Kingdom into the Hands of the then Eſtabliſh'd Church; and failing to come up to that height they expected, in gratifying their Ambition, Avarice and Cruelty, had a League form'd againſt him by this Church, whom he had ſupported and favoured, who drove him from his Capital City of *Paris*, and other Parts of his Kingdom, till he was forced at laſt to call to his Aid his Diſſenting Subjects, whom he had diſcountenanc'd, oppreſſed, and (as you truly obſerve) excluded from publick Offices and Imployments.

With an Army of theſe, and ſome other of his Loyal and *Loving* Subjects he beſieges *Paris* (which was then held out againſt him by his *Beloved* Subjects) where near the Walls of that City he was ſtabb'd to death by a JACOBITE Monk, a Member of the then National and Eſtabliſh'd Church.

A dreadful Example, how dangerous it is for Princes ſo to ſtrengthen the Hands of one Party of their People, by heaping of Honours, Riches, and Places of Truſt and Profit on them to that degree, that they ſhall be enabled in time

time to controul, if not ruin, the Prince their Patron and Benefactor; while the other Party is so depressed, that they cannot help him if they would, or at least not timely enough.

But pray Sir, who were they that thought that if this *H.* 3. of *France* had kept the *Hugonots* from publick Offices and Employments, he might in a short time have reduced his whole Kingdom to one Religion; for whoever they were that thought so, you could not but know when you offer'd this to her Majesty, that they were mistaken. *Lewis* the 13*th* began, and *Lewis* the 14*th* continued to try this Experiment for many Years, more than what you could possibly intend by a short time, and yet it would not produce such a defection from the Reformed Religion; witness those many thousands of Protestants in *France*, who have for the sake thereof endured Exile, Death, Torments, Slavery, Loss of Liberty, Estates, Friends, and all the other Comforts of this Life, under the most barbarous and infamous Tyrant that ever reigned; whose Dragooning and other Cruelties have had little Fruits but a few mock Converts, some of whom are now up in Arms against him, to free themselves from their Oppressor.

And would it not be as comical for some doughty Politician in the next Age, to propose *Lewis* the 14*th* for an Example how to deal with the *English* Dissenters then, as for Sir *Humphry Mackworth* to propose to her Majesty the Example of *Henry* the 3*d*. how to deal with them now?

I beg your Pardon, Sir, for this Excursion: for it appears by the Tenderness of your Stile, you are far from the Thoughts of Dragooning; you speak of gentle Methods, and the great Tenderness and Affection wherewith the Members of the Church of *England* intend to treat the Dissenters, when once shut out of Publick Offices and Employments, which would put an end to all Clamours and Dissensions. You express the great Charity you have for Dissenters, and as a Friend advise them not to contend for Power and Dominion, or for publick Offices and Employments, which they are no ways entitled to by the Act of Toleration, and which are not any ways necessary for their present

preſent or future Happineſs. You ſay, 'tis high time to heal our Diviſions; and which way can that be done, but by ſuch an Excluſion? which is no Encroachment on any one's Rights or Privileges, but the way to remove thoſe Fears and Jealouſies which have ever been the cauſe of the Diſſenters Proſecution, and to make the Church and Diſſenters live together in Peace and Unity.

But, Sir, is all this Jeſt or Earneſt? I long to know by what Name to call it: For if it be Jeſt, 'tis a Banter; if Earneſt, a Wheedle. And yet I can hardly believe the latter, or that it could be deſigned to perſuade the Diſſenters, or any indifferent men, to conſent to ſuch an Excluſion. For can any man be prevail'd with to diveſt himſelf ſo far of common Senſe, as to believe all this? To think the excluding of Diſſenters from publick Offices and Imployments, the ſetting an eternal mark of diſtinction upon them from the reſt of her Majeſty's Subjects, and conſequently of infamy too; the depriving them of their Birthrights, which entitles them to a capacity of ſerving her Majeſty and their Country in Offices not only of Truſt but Profit, as well as others; and the laying them open in the higheſt degree to the Inſults of their Adverſaries (particularly of a ſett of men that have bin diſcountenanc'd by all wiſe Governments, I mean Informers) into whoſe hands all that Power and Dominion under her Majeſty (which you ſeem ſo fond of) you would have to be put, while the Diſſenters are depriv'd of all ability to help themſelves: I ſay, can any man think theſe to be methods of Gentleneſs, Tenderneſs, Affection or Charity towards the Diſſenters? Beſides, the Diſſenters ſay you have utterly miſtaken them, when you charge them with contending for Power and Dominion; for it is not that they immediately contend for, but for thoſe Privileges and Capacities, which God, Nature, and the Laws of their Country (whatever you have ſaid to the contrary) allow them; and (among other things) that if they take ſuch Teſts and Oaths as the Law enjoins, they ſhall be on the ſame foot with their Fellow-Subjects, and be equally capable with them of Offices and Imployments in the Commonwealth, and have on that account a right thereunto; which

Advantages

Advantages they cannot pretend to in our National Church, for there the reaſon fails as to the Diſſenters, they being no Members thereof.

You have advanc'd methinks three or four very ſtrange Poſitions: One is, That the excluding Diſſenters from publick Offices and Imployments, will be no Incroachment on their Rights. I do not well underſtand this: It muſt be ſome refin'd Notion certainly, which I never heard of before; for I always innocently thought that he incroaches on my Right, who takes my Right away. Another is, That this Excluſion will make the Church and Diſſenters live together in Peace and Unity. I doubt, Sir, you'l find it very hard to make good this Aſſertion, unleſs the Diſſenters be of the mind of that Gentleman, who ſaid, he got into the favour of the great Men at Court by receiving Injuries, and giving thanks for them. For my part, however unkindly the Diſſenters may be dealt with, I wiſh you may be a true Prophet. You undertake too, that upon this Excluſion all Fears and Jealouſies, which were wont to cauſe the Diſſenters Proſecution, will be removed.

Habemus confitentem reum: We have here the confeſſion of an Adverſary, that 'tis not matter of Conſcience or Religion, but Fears and Jealouſies that the Diſſenters ſhould ſupplant the Church of *England* men in the Civil Adminiſtration, which make ſome men ſo zealous for this Excluſion of Diſſenters. Nor do I at preſent ſee what ground you have to undertake that, when the Diſſenters are excluded from Offices and Imployments, they ſhould be treated with tenderneſs and affection. Some good-natur'd folks, for ought I know, may think it to be true, notwithſtanding the two pregnant Inſtances of *Julian* the Apoſtate and *Lewis* the 14*th* to the contrary, who both took the very ſame Methods you preſcribe, in order to extirpate Chriſtianity, and the Proteſtant Religion: The former made the incapacitating the Chriſtians to hold any Place or Office, Civil or Military, his firſt ſtep to the rooting out of the Chriſtian Religion; and when the latter took the ſame courſe with the Proteſtants of *France*, it was but a Forerunner of the total breach of the Edict of *Nants*, and of the

the Perſecution that followed thereupon. And I would willingly know whether the incapacitating Diſſenters to ſerve her Majeſty and their Country, particularly at this Juncture, when the united Force of *England* and her Confederates ſeems ſcarce to ballance him, muſt not be grateful to that aſpiring Monarch, and give him a nearer proſpect of obtaining a univerſal Empire, and conſequently of intruding the Prince of *Wales* upon us? Not that I would have it thought that thoſe who labour for this Bill, have ſuch intentions.

But to return, You give ſome remarkable Reaſons why the Diſſenters ſhould ſit down contented with this excluſion: 1. They are not entitl'd to publick Offices and Imployments by the Act of Toleration. Why, Sir, if you were to reduce this into a Syllogiſm, I pray what would be your Concluſion? Give me leave for once to help you out: It muſt certainly be this, Therefore the Diſſenters are not intitul'd to publick Offices and Imployments by any Law whatſoever: I follow the terms of your Premiſes, whereby I ſuppoſe you mean they are not intitul'd to a capacity (or in better *Engliſh*, are not capable) of holding them. As for the Concluſion out of your Premiſes, 'tis ſuch a bold and ſenſeleſs *non ſequitur*, that I would by no means fix it upon you, and therefore have, you ſee, taken it upon my ſelf: For who could expect to find in the Act of Toleration (which is directed to a quite different end and purpoſe) whether the Diſſenters are capable of Civil Offices? As they are Subjects they are capable to ſerve their Prince and Country in any Station whatſoever, if they refuſe not thoſe Oaths and Teſts which are enjoin'd by the Laws; and for ought I can perceive, your great quarrel with them is for that they are too ready to take them. The Diſſenters ought not to trouble themſelves about Offices, for that they are not any ways neceſſary for their preſent or future Happineſs. Here's a Leſſon of mortification that could not be expected: Honours, Riches, and worldly Advantages and Preferments are little things in your eye. What Diſſenter now (after the good advice you have given him) would ſearch even into the Bowels of the Earth for the Mammon of this world;

would court the Populace, and canvaſs for the Votes of the Vulgar, to procure a Place in that Honourable Body whereof you are a Member; would to curry favour with the Great Ones, write contrary to the Dictates of right Reaſon, the Laws and Conſtitution of his Country, and ſometimes even of common Senſe; and in hopes of a little Preferment, would incite an *Engliſh* Prince to lay Impoſitions upon the People without conſent of Parliament, contrary to *Magna Charta* and the Petition of Right; nay, and thank him for doing ſo? What Diſſenter, I ſay, would attempt theſe things, ſeeing all the advantages he can propoſe to himſelf thereby, are not neceſſary for his preſent or future Happineſs? This is a pretty ſort of arguing peculiar to your ſelf, Sir; and you ſecond all this with a Queſtion as pertinent as the reſt, Whether there are no hopes of going to a better World without a publick Imployment.

Hitherto, while you have been preparing a Fool's Paradiſe for the Diſſenters, and ſhewing 'em the happy and eaſy condition they will be in, when ſhut out of all Imployments in the Commonwealth, you have dealt pretty civilly with them: But *Naturam expellas furca licet*, &c. Nature will recoil and ſhew it ſelf, it being impoſſible you could hold out longer; for now all the Calumny and Slander that can flow from an imbitter'd Pen, break out, and ſufficiently diſcover your Principles, and what you deſign by this Excluſion of the Diſſenters: Your Quarrel now appears to be, not with the Occaſional Conformiſt only, but with him too whom you are pleas'd to ſtile the conſcientious Diſſenter; in ſhort, againſt the whole Body of the Diſſenters in general. You tell the World, they will at one time or other, if enabled, deſtroy the National Church; That they are not conſiſtent with the Peace and Safety of the Eſtabliſhed Government; That they will not draw with the Church-men; That they neither approve of the Laws, nor will obey them; That their very Principles are oppoſite to thoſe of the Church of *England*; That (if once imployed) they will overturn, deſtroy, and tear in pieces the eſtabliſhed Government, and undermine the Church; That 'tis the Intereſt of the Diſſenters to deſtroy the Laws,

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and that they are made uſe of to extirpate the Chriſtian Religion; That the Contention between the Churchmen and the Diſſenters ſeems to be grown to that height, that in all probability it cannot laſt much longer without ruin. You ſay, if the Diſſenters be admitted to publick Imployments, the Government will run the hazard of being ruin'd by a mixt and oppoſite Adminiſtration of publick Officers.

Here's a hideous Outcry of approaching Deſtruction to the National Church, and the Laws; of overturning and tearing in pieces the State, and of extirpating the very Chriſtian Religion, and all this by the Diſſenters: which put together, ſheweth the excellency of your good Nature, that you are willing ſuch men as theſe, who are fitter to be treated with Halters, Gibbets, Baniſhment, and all the Severities imaginable, if theſe things be true that you have with ſo much aſſurance laid to their charge, than with thoſe gentle Methods that you ſay are intended for them: To give men of ſuch Principles as you repreſent them to be, a toleration, and thereby run the hazard of overthrowing both Church and State, and extirpating the Chriſtian Religion, ſeems to be a moſt unaccountable piece of Folly and Impiety too; and yet you are wonderful willing to allow them a Toleration. From whence I conclude, that either you your ſelf do not believe the Calumnies you have loaded them with, or that you and the Gentlemen of your Principles look upon the preſent Toleration as not over-long liv'd, if once the Diſſenters are ſhut out of all Magiſtracy, Authority, and Places of Truſt in the Commonwealth; which I confeſs they ought to be, if it be true, that they are joining with Deiſts, Socinians, and God knows whom beſides, to extirpate the Chriſtian Religion. Which Paſſage, under favour, Sir, argues either extreme Ignorance or extreme Malice: Ignorance, if you confine the Chriſtian Religion to the National Church of *England*; but Malice, if you deſign to make the People believe ſo. I have known indeed ſome of the Vulgar, who verily believ'd (and had been told ſo by ſeveral of their Leaders) that the Church of *England* were the only Proteſtants. But you, Sir, ſhall

by my consent have the honour of this Epitaph, *Hic jacet hujus Sententiæ primus Author*, The Church of *England* are the only Christians.

But I pray, Sir, whence comes this mighty Alarm of Destruction, Ruin, and undermining of the Church and State, tearing to pieces the Government, Disobedience to the Laws, and extirpating the very Christian Religion? All which and a great deal more poysonous Matter your Book is stuff'd with, you lay to the charge of the Dissenters, especially of the Occasional Conformists, whom with so much confidence you charge with the breach of the Laws, while your great quarrel with them is, that they conform to the Laws. Shew me one instance, Sir, if you can (and I challenge you to it) where the Dissenters have since the Act of Toleration broken any of those Laws you seem to be so tender of: Nay before the passing of that Act did they not in the greatest extremity of the Church, when the Bishops were in the Tower, heartily join with her, and in many instances evidently manifest they had no prejudice to the National Church? And since the passing of that Act have they not behav'd themselves accordingly? Have not their Resolutions to serve the present Establishment, and the future Succession, been sufficiently tried by their Oaths and Declarations, by the warmth of their Prayers for this happy Government, and the Loyalty of their Sermons; nay even by their common Talk, where Nature may be thought to have more Power, and to be less disguised and over-ruled by consideration and design, than in complying with publick Oaths and other State-Securities? And do they do not still continue declared Enemies to the Queen's and Nation's Enemies? How comes such a Bill as this to be so absolutely necessary now, more than for several Years after the late happy Revolution? Where was the Danger, Mischief or Inconvenience to the Church during the late Reign, by letting into the Administration of publick Affairs a few Persons who dissented from the Establish'd Church in some of her Rites, Ceremonies and Modes of Worship, as well as a great many of the Members of that Church? unless it were that there was less room for Tories, High-fliers and Jacobites,

Jacobites, who then as well as now waited for the Power and Opportunity of deſtroying, not only the preſent Government and future Succeſſion in the State, but likewiſe that National and Eſtabliſhed Church you ſeem ſo zealouſly to contend for? Such Perſons, I mean, as would deſtroy all the Laws of Property, and ſubject us to a Deſpotick and Arbitrary Power; and ſuch as are of the ſame Kidny with thoſe who ſubſcribed the following Addreſs to the late King *James*, juſt on his Acceſſion to the Throne, pretended to be an Addreſs from the *Middle Temple*, tho (for the Honour of that Society be it ſpoken) no Perſon of Parts or Note among them had a hand in the contrivance of it, but one who was a known Apoſtate from the Principles wherein he was educated, and which he openly profeſſed till the Popiſh Plot began to be diſcountenanced, and who is now gone to his own place. The Addreſs it ſelf for your better Information, who poſſibly may have forgotten it, I have here inſerted.

Moſt Dread Sovereign,

" WE Your Majeſty's moſt Dutiful and Loyal Sub-
" jects, with all Humility congratulate the legal
" and peaceable Deſcent of this Imperial Crown upon Your
" Majeſty, the only Remedy for our unſpeakable Sorrow
" for the Death of our late moſt Gracious Sovereign, of
" ever Glorious and Bleſſed Memory.

" Your Majeſty's unparallel'd Juſtice, Courage and Con-
" duct (ſignalized to the World before they became O-
" naments to the Crown) give a perfect aſſurance of Hap-
" pineſs to theſe Nations under your Government. We
" cannot therefore but with the deepeſt ſenſe of Gratitude,
" acknowledg your Majeſty's great Goodneſs and Con-
" deſcenſion in your late Declaration, and in particular,
" That your Majeſty hath been Graciouſly pleaſed in pur-
" ſuance of the ſame, to extend your Royal Care of the
" Government to the Preſervation of the Cuſtoms; the
" Intermiſſion whereof would not only have diſabled your

" Majeſty

" Majeſty to maintain the Navy in defence of the Realm,
" but by taking away the Ballance of Trade, have ruined
" Thouſands of your Majeſty's Subjects that paid Cuſtom
" in the Life of our late Sovereign, and by an exceſſive
" Exportation and Importation Cuſtom free, have ren-
" dered that Branch of the Revenue unprofitable for ſome
" Years to come, notwithſtanding all the Care and Loyal-
" ty of the ſucceeding Parliament. For which reaſons the
" ſame have been continually received by your Majeſty's
" Royal Predeceſſors for ſome hundreds of Years, and ne-
" ver queſtioned by any Parliament, unleſs in that wherein
" were ſown the Seeds of Rebellion againſt the Glorious
" Martyr, your Royal Father, of ever bleſſed Memory.

" 'Tis a received Maxim of the Common Law [*Theſau-
" rus Regis eſt Vinculum Pacis & Bellorum Nervi*] ſuch is
" the happy Conſtitution of this Monarchy, That your
" Majeſty's High Prerogative is the greateſt Security of the
" Liberty and Property of the Subject; ſo that whoever
" would impair the Revenue of the Crown, muſt by this
" Fundamental Law (as binding as *Magna Charta*, and
" more antient) be eſteemed an Enemy to the Peace and
" Welfare of this Kingdom.

" We therefore think it our indiſpenſible Duty, to en-
" deavour the Choice of ſuch Repreſentatives for the re-
" ſpective Counties and Boroughs to which we belong, as
" may not only concur in ſettling a Revenue to ſupport the
" Government as formerly, but alſo ſhew a grateful ſenſe
" of the great things you have done and ſuffered for us al-
" ready; an entire Confidence in your Majeſty's Good-
" neſs towards us for the future, and a chearful Compli-
" ance of your Heroick Inclinations, to advance the Ho-
" nour and Intereſt of theſe Nations. May there be ne-
" ver wanting Millions as Loyal as we are, to ſacrifice their
" Lives and Fortunes in defence of your ſacred Perſon and
" Prerogative in its full Extent, and inceſſantly pray the
" King of Kings to grant your Majeſty a long and happy
" Reign over us.

This

This Addreſs needs no Comment; for by the ſame Rule that a King of *England* can by his Prerogative without an Act of Parliament, levy the Duties of Tunnage and Poundage upon his Subjects, he may lay on them what other Impoſitions he pleaſes, and tax them by his ſingle Authority to the value of their Eſtates.

Beſides thoſe Paſſages in your Book I have taken notice of, there are many others, whereby you have expoſed your ſelf to cenſure enough: But I would not preſs upon you too far, only I find two very untrue and miſtaken Notions therein.

The one is, that the Teſt Act was made not only to keep *Popiſh* Recuſants, but all ſorts of Diſſenters from the National Church, out of the Adminiſtration of publick Affairs: the contrary whereof is evident by the Time, the Occaſion, the Title, the Preamble, and the enacting part of that Act; and that it was deſigned to reſtrain Popiſh Recuſants, and not other Diſſenters, to be a Security to the Proteſtant Religion in general, and not to the Church of *England* in particular.

Nor can it be reaſonably thought, that that great Stateſman the Earl of *Shaftsbury*, who was the principal Promoter of that Act, ſhould ſo miſtake his Deſign, as to procure a Teſt to cramp the Diſſenters, to whom he was known to have very favourable Intentions. It had been found by experience how inſignificant Oaths had been to keep the Papiſts out of publick Offices and Employments; and therefore the ſacramental Teſt was framed, which it was conceived (and ſo it proved) the Papiſts would never ſubmit to, but would not exclude the Generality of Proteſtant Diſſenters, many of whom were wont to communicate occaſionally with the Church, long before that Teſt was thought on. How then can you or any Man ſay, that the Diſſenters by taking the Sacramental Teſt do elude that Law, which was never intended againſt 'em, but deſigned to diſtinguiſh the Diſſenters as well as other Proteſtants from Popiſh Recuſants? Or with what colour can it be pretended, that the Bill you endeavour to defend, is but to reinforce the Teſt Act, and in purſuance thereof, whenas that Act was deſigned againſt Papiſts, and this Bill againſt Proteſtants? The

The other thing you affirm is, That the Act of Toleration is not concerned in this Controverſy, and that neither the Act it ſelf, nor any Clauſe therein would have been repealed, if this Bill had paſſed into a Law. Nay no Man (you ſay) hath had the confidence to aſſert any ſuch thing, and the Bill it ſelf ſufficiently demonſtrates the contrary. I have read the Bill as you have repreſented it (tho under your Favour, it is not the ſame Bill in every particular that paſſed the Commons Houſe, and was brought up to the Houſe of Lords) and confeſs, I find no poſitive Words of Repeal in it; and I have too much Deference and Reſpect for that Honourable Body, to ſay it would have eluded the Act of Toleration. But I'll put my Caſe, and then leave it to you to give it a right Name: A Diſſenter hath a Back-Friend, who gets him prick'd High Sheriff of his County, or put into the Commiſſion of Peace, or ſome other Publick Office of Burden; if he refuſes to capacitate himſelf by taking the Sacramental Teſt, he becomes diſobedient to his Prince, and the Laws which require him to perform thoſe Services, and he may be puniſhed by Fine. The next Year he is pricked Sheriff again, or he may be put into a new Commiſſion of the Peace, or choſen again into ſome ſuch other Office. As his Refuſal is repeated, ſo may his Puniſhment be repeated likewiſe, and ſo *ad Infinitum*, till the poor Gentleman is ruined and undone; which yet by your Principles is a piece of very juſtifiable Policy, tho half a thouſand Diſſenters be ſerved ſo, the more the better, for it will weaken and diſpirit the Party, render them leſs formidable, and very much contribute to the Safety of Sir *Humphry Mackworth*'s Eſtabliſh'd Church. But now turn the Tables, the Gentleman we firſt ſpake of takes the ſacramental Teſt, and is admitted into the Office, then farewell for ever to Conventicles, Aſſemblies, or Meetings, for the exerciſe of Religion in other manner than according to the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, where there are five beſides the Family; for if he will needs adventure after ſuch fair Warning, he ſhall forfeit one hundred Pounds, and five Pounds for every day that he continues in the execution of ſuch Office, after his being preſent at any

ſuch

ſuch Conventicle, *&c.* and after Conviction ſhall be diſabled to hold ſuch Office, and be incapable of bearing any Office whatſoever; and for the ſecond Offence ſhall incur double the Penalties, and be under the ſame Incapacities.

Now it is to be obſerved, that here is no time limited for the Conviction, and until Conviction he is not diſabled to hold the Office; and until ſuch Diſability, altho he reſorted to ſuch Conventicle or Religious Meeting, he is bound by Law to hold the Office: Suppoſe then it be half a year after the Offence committed before he is convicted, which is a modeſt Computation, he muſt either preſently after ſuch Offence forbear to exerciſe the Office, which if he doth, he is liable to the ſame Fine, Impriſonment and Proſecution, as if he had refuſed the Office at the firſt; or if he continues to exerciſe the Office during the half Year before he is convicted, he ſhall forfeit one hundred Pounds; and (there being 365 days in the Year, I'll not ſtand with you for the odd day) he ſhall forfeit (at the rate of five Pounds a day) the Sum of 910 Pounds. Beſides at this rate, as the Fool ſaid when he had rid upon a Covel Staff, that for the Name of a Horſe he had as good have gone on foot; ſo may the Diſſenters ſay, if ever ſuch a Bill as this ſhould paſs, that but for the Name of an Act of Toleration, they had as good have had no Act of Toleration at all.

Nor are your Politicks, Sir, at this juncture to be paſſed over in ſilence: For is this a proper and ſeaſonable time to ſet the Nation together by the Ears, when it hath two mighty Kingdoms, and their Partiſans and Dependents to contend with, and an Univerſal Monarchy deſigned to inſlave *Europe*; when the Papiſts, acknowledged by all but Tories, High-flyers and Jacobites, to be far more formidable Enemies to our National and Eſtabliſhed Church than the Diſſenters can poſſibly be ſuſpected to be, are undermining our Religion at home, while our Enemies abroad are priding themſelves in their Succeſſes, and the Winds and Tempeſts fight againſt us, as if they were the Forerunners of thoſe Storms which ſome furious Zealots deſign to raiſe

among us, by dividing us; and this notwithſtanding nothing but Union (ſo lately recommended to the Parliament from the Throne) can ſave us from the Common Enemy?

And now, Sir, much good may your Bill do you: I once more call it yours, for that it is not the ſame that was ſent up by the Commons to the Houſe of Lords. As for your Book, the whole Nation is obliged to you for giving them ſuch fair Warning what they muſt truſt to, if ſome Men prevail: Upon this account you have the particular Thanks of my Friend and my ſelf, who am,

SIR,

Exeter, Dec. 14. 1703.

Yours, &c.

FINIS.